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**Testimony before the Labor and Public Employees Committee of the
Connecticut General Assembly
February 26, 2013**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Jaime Shaw. I've worked as a Probate Court Officer in the Waterbury Regional Children's Probate Court for two years. I'm here in **support of HB 6417: AN ACT CONCERNING PROBATE COURT EMPLOYEES**. This legislation would provide myself and my coworkers the basic human right of having a voice at work. You may not be aware of the fact that Probate Court employees are, by statute, not State of Connecticut employees.

In the spring of last year, my coworkers and I came together to collectively bargain for better wages and conditions of employment. With Council 4 AFSCME, we filed with the State Board of Labor Relations for recognition of our union. Despite being paid through the state payroll system, having our sick time and vacation time tracked through the state's CORE system, being hired and supervised through the central office, having one Workman's Compensation policy for the entire pool of Probate Court Employees, and qualifying to utilize the Family Medical Leave Act as a byproduct of the Probate Court's state-wide centralization, our petition was denied because the statute contained one simple word: "not". Per statute, we are not "deemed to be state employees" despite the fact that virtually every aspect of our day-to-day operation is governed and overseen by Probate Court Administration, an arm of the State of Connecticut Judicial Department.

My coworkers and I deserve the right to organize. We came together because my fellow Probate Court Officers and I believe the centralization of administration of the Probate Court system in the State of Connecticut changes the nature of our status as employees. We are not, despite the claims of Probate Court Administration, employees of independent and autonomous courts. Our paycheck stubs, our business cards, our letterhead are all emblazoned with the great seal of the State of Connecticut. We, as Probate Court Officers, are supervised by the Program Manager for Mental Health and Family Programs (Stephanie Janes) for the clinical aspects of our jobs. Our day-to-day activities are supervised by the Judge and Chief Clerk who are accountable to Probate Court Administration. The oversight of Probate Court Administration has even impacted me on a personal level recently. I was required to submit my son's birth certificate in order for the unpaid portion of my maternity leave covered by the Family Medical Leave Act to be verified. In adding my newborn son to my medical policy, I was in direct contact with an employee of Probate Court Administration, NOT the chief clerk or the administrative judge of my court as the current statute would suggest.

It is because of these egregious inconsistencies among many others that I respectfully request the right to organize. As the statutes stand written on this date, my fellow Probate Court Employees and I have no voice within the Probate Court Administration. I am required to adhere to the SEBAC agreement although I am not represented by a union. I had to accept two years of wage freezes like all other state employees, without being afforded their job security for the next few years. I am required to choose a State of Connecticut medical insurance plan while being forced to pay a significantly higher premium for my dependants' coverage than the state employee. I have the seal of the State of Connecticut on practically everything I send out of the court from my business card to my Release of Information.

But what I don't have is a real voice on the job, the right to bargain for a better way of life as my state employee counterparts do. It is for these reasons that I deserve the right to organize. Thank you for your time.